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## THE ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF THE SOUTHERN STATES<sup>1</sup>

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The Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Southern States held its first meeting in Atlanta, Ga., November 6, 1895. This is, therefore, the eighteenth annual meeting. Perhaps at this time it will not be amiss to renew briefly the way we have come, to consider the tasks already undertaken and in part accomplished, and to note the work still remaining for us to do.

It was a small group of men that met in the chapel of the Georgia School of Technology seventeen years ago. Sixteen delegates were present, representing twelve institutions. No speeches were made. There were no outbursts of eloquence, for there was no gallery to play to. But there was much earnest discussion. A serious tone pervaded the gathering. Men discussed the educational situation in the South with frankness and sincerity. Each delegate spoke of his own institution, not to laud or magnify, but to set forth its weaknesses and its shortcomings. In considering the possible organization of an association it was recognized that there was no need of a general educational gathering. Such needs were already supplied, and we had no desire to add to the list. We did have in mind an annual gathering where the peculiar problems of schools and colleges might be discussed and illuminated, but we had also a more distinct purpose than this. The new association was to be a group of institutions pledged to certain standards. It was a compact. Membership in the association was not an honor, but an obligation, the observance of which was not without its inconvenience and cost. The fundamental principles of the association were embodied in the constitution and by-laws, and there was a pledge, either expressed or under-

<sup>1</sup> President's address delivered at Wafford College, Spartanburg, S.C., November 15, 1912.

stood, that the provisions of the by-laws should be observed. At the same time, care was taken that these provisions should be few in number and of reasonable import. The association has never sought to interfere with the freedom of each institution. The colleges and universities constituting its membership represent varying types and differ in a score of particulars. The points on which uniformity has been demanded have been a few essential principles accepted and approved by all. We have exercised a wise self-restraint, and no complaint has ever been made of unjust legislation. No institution has ever withdrawn from our association through a sense of wrong done or a lack of sympathy with our purposes. The single withdrawal of a college once a member was occasioned by the increase in our requirements, and the institution so withdrawing has continued to affiliate with us.

While our association was formed for the purpose of general co-operation in all the work of school and college, yet our attention was first directed to one particular task, the adjustment of the relationship between the high school and the college. At that time most colleges conducted preparatory classes. Students left the high school at almost any stage of their preparation and applied for admission to college. If it appeared excusable they were admitted to the Freshman class; if this seemed impossible they entered one of the sub-Freshman classes. The effect of such a practice on the schools can easily be imagined, and indeed is well remembered by most of us. There was no opportunity left for independent school work of a high grade. Colleges and schools competed for the same students, and unfortunately the colleges won in too many cases. While this state of affairs still persists to some extent among some institutions, there has been great improvement in the past seventeen years. To meet this condition was our first task. Our plan of attack was along three different lines.

In the first place, a by-law was adopted prohibiting all preparatory classes. The subclasses in English, mathematics, Latin, and Greek, so characteristic of every institution, were declared intolerable. This experiment had been tried with marked success at Vanderbilt University seven years before the organization of

the southern association, and Vanderbilt's experience was a great encouragement to other institutions. Without this we should hardly have been bold enough to advocate such a reduction in attendance. It was believed that if a few could be found willing to take such a step their experience would commend this action to others. We looked also to the schools to bring some pressure to bear on the colleges and throw their support to those institutions that left to the schools a field in which to live and work.

In the second place, we undertook to define the admission requirements for the Freshman class. These requirements seem now extremely low, but at that time it was not easy for many institutions to meet them, particularly as no subclasses were left to catch the unprepared. The requirements covered the subjects of English, Latin, Greek, mathematics, and history. In English we accepted from the beginning the national standard, then known as the requirement of the Association of Schools and Colleges in the Middle States and Maryland. In Latin our requirements measured about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  units, in Greek a little less than 2, in mathematics  $1\frac{1}{2}$ , and in history 1. These amounted altogether to nearly ten units, provided the student proposed to take all these subjects. But no substitutes were demanded for Latin and Greek in case the student did not take the classics. All such students could enter on  $5\frac{1}{2}$  units, and irregular students could even be received on English and history alone, equal to 4 units. No doubt these irregular or non-classical students had studied other subjects, but there was no well-defined or accepted substitute for Latin and Greek that could be counted on; therefore, our association made no provision for other subjects than those named.

In the third place, colleges belonging to the association were required to hold entrance examinations of the scope above indicated and to print their questions, depositing copies with the secretary of the association. In this way publicity guaranteed security, as in the management of the trusts. Papers unreasonably easy were an object of ridicule. As these papers went into the hands of teachers, they offered a basis on which the work of the college might be appraised. Not only the entering Freshmen were graded on these papers, but the professors and the colleges as well.

Certificates were allowed from the beginning. No attempt was made to force examination of all students. But it was assumed that a considerable number of students would be examined. In the absence of reliable high schools, public or private, it was supposed that only a few students would be able to bring satisfactory certificates. We did not then foresee the rapid growth of public high schools and the universal rebellion on the part of pupils and teachers against the hardship and indignity of entrance examinations.

With these explanations it is not hard to understand that few institutions were ready to accept the regulations agreed on. Only six colleges entered into the compact, viz., Vanderbilt University, the University of North Carolina, Sewanee, Mississippi, Washington and Lee, and Trinity College. Even these were secured through concessions. The general requirements were not to become effective until September, 1897, and the requirement in Greek in 1898. Thus, and thus only, was the southern association brought into being.

As a matter of fact, the requirement in Greek never became effective. A strong effort was made to have Greek taught in our schools so as to enable us to enforce our entrance requirement, but without success. At the second meeting of the association in 1896 three papers were presented on the study of Greek, one by Vice-Chancellor Wiggins of Sewanee. Even then the suggestion had been made that Greek should be begun in college, but Dr. Wiggins opposed this vigorously. The next year a series of reports was presented on the requirements of the association and the methods of study in various subjects. That on Greek was prepared by Messrs. Wiggins, John M. Webb, and Bocock. This report declared that the existing requirements in Greek, viz., three books of the *Anabasis*, were reasonable and could soon be met. In the discussion President Raymond of the University of West Virginia made a strong plea for beginning Greek in college. While we were all discussing the reasonableness of the requirements in Greek, Professor P. H. Saunders of the University of Mississippi was getting ready to meet them. His work was described in a paper presented to the association in 1899. Pro-

fessor Saunders gave courses in Greek to the teachers of Mississippi at the summer normal. He also opened a correspondence course, and by his personal influence secured pupils for it. At the time of his paper in 1899, forty-four schools were teaching Greek, and thirty-one had been affiliated with the university in that subject. Twenty-eight students met the requirement for admission to the Freshman class in Greek in 1899, and seven others were only partially deficient. Unfortunately, Professor Saunders stood almost alone in this work and the requirements of the association were postponed year by year. Finally, in 1902, the association adopted by-laws, unchanged in this respect today, placing Greek with French and German and allowing all of them to be begun in college. In this matter of Greek the plans of the association failed. We were trying to stem a tide too strong for us and wisely decided to yield to the inevitable with grace and promptness. None the less do we admire and honor those schools that still retain the study of Greek and those colleges that still demand classical attainments for the A.B. degree.

Let us now consider other changes that have been made in the program of the association with passing years. At the eighth annual meeting held in 1902 the requirements for admission were revised, and French, German, and science were introduced. Candidates for A.B. offering Latin and Greek were not disturbed by the new rules, but non-classical students were now required to offer English, 3 units; mathematics,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  units; modern languages, 4 units; history, 1 unit; science, 1 unit; total,  $10\frac{1}{2}$  units. This was approximately equal to the demands made on classical students. The demands made on irregular students remained pitifully weak, not more than  $5\frac{1}{2}$  units.

Inasmuch as colleges were now allowed openly to furnish preparatory instruction in French, German, and Greek, it was evidently impossible longer to enforce the first by-law which forbade this entirely. This by-law was therefore amended by adding the words "except as allowed in section 3 below." At a later date, in 1908, when the association adopted the present by-laws effective in 1910, the rule was changed so as to forbid a regular preparatory department conducted as part of the college

organization. The rules of the association on this point become less important as the admission requirements are increased. If every student entering college presented fourteen units, without condition or deficiency of any kind, it would not be necessary to provide any measures against preparatory classes or departments. But one main purpose of our association has always been to foster and protect high schools, and colleges should not be allowed to enrol students for the completion of their high-school course, providing suitable classes for that purpose. The spirit of our laws may be thus interpreted: No student entering college on less than fourteen units, satisfactorily and completely passed, should be allowed to enter any classes for the sake of making up his conditions except in Greek, French, or German, and no classes other than these should be maintained for that purpose.

In another particular the rules of the association have suffered a change. At first each institution was required to print its entrance examination papers and file copies with the secretary. This law is not part of our present requirements. Two causes have brought about the change. Since May, 1905, we have printed a general set of examination questions and circulated them in the name of the association. Members of the association have set these papers as their own. But in addition to this fact, there has been an almost entire abandonment of examinations as a means of entering college. It would be of interest to know just how many students entered college on examination this year among all our members. Vanderbilt has been trying to hold to its traditions, but we do so with increasing difficulty. At present we are falling back on a compromise measure, examining chiefly on the work of the last year and accepting certificates for the earlier years. This general abandonment of the examining system seems to make it unnecessary and undesirable longer to continue our practice of printing examination papers. If these papers are not used by the colleges there is no sufficient justification for their publication.

The latest step in our development as an association was taken in 1908, and consisted in the adoption of new requirements for admission, which became operative in 1910. Every institution belonging to the association must now require fourteen units for

admission to any degree course in its literary department. Irregular students must offer at least ten units. The association now has practically no other requirements than these. Colleges make their own regulations as to the specific subjects demanded and as to their treatment of deficient students. The association does not interfere here with regulations. Still, the way is open for discussion, for counsel, and for warning, and we may be of service to each other without the enactment of laws. Certainly the question of standards is affected distinctly by our attitude on these points.

We have now briefly surveyed the progress we have made since the formation of our association. It has not been startling, but it has been steady. We have held fast to our ideals and we have not gone backward. We have exercised a wholesome influence on higher education in the South and we are approaching national standards in school and college work. And we shall not cease nor shall we be satisfied until we attain them.

The task immediately before us is the development of a sensible, reasonable system of certification. This will require faithful work for a number of years. If all students are to be received by the colleges on certificate, then it is surely incumbent on us to see that the certificate has a definite meaning, that it is in satisfactory form, that it is a guaranty of a worthy high-school course behind it. The list of accredited schools ought to be a roll of honor, and we must make it so. Certificates constantly accepted at the present time in fulfillment of our entrance requirements are often meaningless and worthless. But there are other tasks that await us, and I make bold to suggest some of them.

Our requirements for admission need further amendment in the near future. We must not deceive ourselves with the claim that we have adopted a fourteen-unit standard. The significant fact remains that students may be and are received on ten units. It is possible to enter our Freshman classes with less than three years of high-school work. Are we not ready to put a stop to these minimum requirements? Ought we to put a premium on the worst form of college course, viz., the irregular course, and invite callow youths to leave the high school after two years to



enter college? My proposition is that no student be received whose certificate does not show twelve units satisfactorily completed. No conditions or deficiencies should be allowed below twelve units. This means at least the completion of a three-year high-school course. Between twelve and fourteen units is the field for conditions, for we must adhere to fourteen units as the full requirement for admission. The deficiencies of any entering student should further be taken into account in arranging the work of the first year. The chairman of the entrance committee should have authority so to arrange and limit this work that all these deficiencies be made up during the year and before the student is allowed to matriculate for his second year. Let the student thus deficient be treated as on trial and only partly a matriculate. He should not be allowed to represent his college on athletic or other teams nor to join a fraternity. His attention should be kept strictly to study until he has made good his deficiency. While some of these suggestions are not suited for incorporation in our by-laws, I fully believe we are now ready to adopt an absolute minimum standard of twelve units without conditions of any kind.

I am further of the opinion that in recommending schools and colleges for membership in the association the executive committee should have some discretion outside of the few rigid restrictions imposed through our by-laws. There are tests of eligibility that cannot and should not be made into fixed enactments. I should also like to see provision made for receiving individuals as members of the association on payment of two dollars as an annual fee. This I would do without giving them the right to vote on constitutional amendments. I would increase the annual dues of colleges and universities to ten dollars, leaving schools to pay five dollars as at present. All these suggestions might be covered by a few changes in our constitution, as follows:

#### ARTICLE II

SECTION 1. The members of the association shall consist of three classes: first, colleges and universities; second, schools; third, individuals.

SEC. 2. Election to membership shall be only at regular annual meetings and on recommendation of the executive committee, which committee shall judge of the eligibility of an institution in matters not explicitly covered by

the constitution and by-laws. The character and tone of an institution are factors of consequence in determining eligibility.

SEC. 3. In transacting the ordinary business of the association all delegates present shall be entitled to vote, but amendments to the constitution and by-laws shall only be made by the first two classes of members, each institution having one vote.

#### ARTICLE VI

To meet the expenses of the association an annual fee of ten dollars shall be paid by each college or university; five dollars by each school; and two dollars by each individual member. Failure to pay dues for two years in succession forfeits membership.

#### BY-LAW 3

Fourteen units are required of all students admitted to college. Conditions are allowed to the extent of two units only, and all conditions or deficiencies must be removed during the first year in college. College work taken to remove conditions must not be counted toward a degree.

The southern association has had a creditable history. It has held fast to a definite line of work, and has exercised a strong influence on standards of higher education in southern institutions. Its task is not yet accomplished. We cannot be true or useful unless we recognize present duties and present tasks. Some of these have been set before us in this paper and will doubtless be met by the association in the same spirit in which it has undertaken other improvements.